



Patients in the Rio Grande Valley demonstrate their arm prostheses for the camera.

MPO Staff Travels to LaFeria to Help at Shriners Hospital Clinic

Earl Fogler, CP, Stan Vyrzal, CP and head technician Mike Paschal are frequent flyers to the Rio Grande Valley area. At least eight times a year, the trio participates in a clinic sponsored by the Shriners Hospital-Houston to help children who do not have regular access to orthotic and prosthetic health care. While the clinic serves local children, others commute from Mexico, some as far away as Mexico City.

Doctors, nurses, physical therapists, orthotic and prosthetic practitioners, technicians, social workers and administrators staff the two-day clinic.

"We do the examinations, determine what they need, and cast them. Six weeks later, we do a follow-up clinic to fit them," said Earl. "At the main clinic we usually see from 25 to 30 kids. The majority of

the children have congenital issues and there are a few from accidents, cerebral palsy patients and patients with orthopedic anomalies. We also see many upper extremity patients; the last trip we delivered seven upper extremity prostheses. We also repair, replace parts, and provide new socks."

The trio has been making the trip for two years, flying into nearby Harlingen and then driving to LaFeria. The Rio Grande Valley Shrine Club provides the facilities for the clinic and Shrine Club volunteers provide whatever support is needed, including driving to Renosa to pick up those without transportation.

The first outreach clinic began in 1969

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in Brownsville, started by the Shrine Hospital chief of staff at the time, Michael Donovan, M.D., who saw the need for medical care in northern Mexico. Over the years, additional personnel were added and the clinic began meeting quarterly. Prosthetic care became part of the clinic in 1999 to decrease the number of patients having to travel to Houston.

Patients gather in the center of a large room at the Rio Grande Valley Shrine Club of Alamin as they wait their turn for examinations.



MPO's Help After Tropical Storm Allison Had Profound Impact on a Houston Family's Life

In 2001, Tropical Storm Allison devastated the Houston area. Flooding resulted in 22 deaths and more than \$5 billion in damage. It also left more than 10,000 people homeless.

Vanessa Davis and her three sons, ages 10, 13 and 14, were in that group. Residents of Sims Bayou area at the time, they lost all of their possessions and extensive water damage left their home uninhabitable. The family spent several long nights in an emergency shelter and when they were finally able to return home, the water inside was shoulder deep. Vanessa's father was able to share his home on a temporary basis, but she knew they desperately needed a place of their own.

It was at this time that Ted Muilenburg presented to the MPO Advisory Committee the idea of adopting a family that had been displaced by the storm.

"We all thought it was a wonderful and most generous thing to do," said Marie Hunt, MPO's office manager. "My co-worker, Gwen Coleman, and I set out to find a family that would best match what MPO could offer."

Gwen contacted the City of Houston and started going down the list of contacts the city had provided.

"Ted, Gwen and I started interviewing potential candidates to help and found there were a lot of people out there that were using this as an opportunity to play the system," said Marie. "I recall telling my brother, Joe Sims, Jr., about what a wonderful thing MPO was trying to do and how overwhelming it was to sort through the thousands of names and interview all of the potential candidates.

Joe told me about his co-worker at the time, Vanessa Davis, a part-time cashier at Rice Epicurean.

After a preliminary phone interview, Gwen and Marie met Vanessa and two of her boys at a Whataburger not far from her home.

"We knew we had the family we had been searching for," Marie said. "We set out to find a place for our new friend and her children to live. It was difficult to find a place for them as there were many people trying to relocate all at the same time. Gwen and I put ourselves in her place - a single mom with three kids starting over, where would we live?"

Finally, after almost seven months, Marie found an apartment complex in Stafford that was just being built. It offered some unique benefits like after-school and educational programs for the residents.

Vanessa wasn't sure she wanted to move so far away from her old neighborhood and her family, but Marie and Gwen convinced her the move was for the best.

At this time, Vanessa also was looking for a full-time job closer to her new home, and Marie was able to help with this as well.

"Having children of my own and living in the Sugar Land area, I was very familiar with several daycare facilities," said Marie. "I had a friend who was the owner of First Experiences, one of the first daycares in the Sugar Land/First Colony area. I explained the situation and she was more than happy to give Vanessa a chance. In the meantime, Gwen and I were buying household goods for Vanessa's new home, all paid for by Ted Muilenburg.

"Gwen and I would always say we were so

thankful that Ted was so generous to provide the funding, otherwise none of this would have been able to happen," said Marie.

On moving day while Vanessa was at work and her boys in school, several MPO staff members were busy setting up the apartment from installation of the washer and dryer, to putting together beds, bringing in living and dining room furniture and dishes, and buying groceries to stock the refrigerator and pantry.

"All Vanessa and her children had to do was bring themselves," Marie said of moving day.

Seven years after one of the worst experiences in Vanessa's life, she is still at the same apartment complex and has moved on from First Experiences to becoming an early childhood teacher at Kids R Kids.

"Life sometimes brings blessings in disguise," said Marie.

"It was a blessing in disguise indeed," Vanessa agreed. "Marie & MPO helped me start my whole life over again. Whenever Marie calls during the year to see how we all are doing, my children still get excited. They jump up and down and shout that Marie's on the phone. She brings presents during Christmas season for all of us. She is my guardian angel."

Added Marie: "I am grateful that Ted Muilenburg and all of the staff here at MPO were able to make a positive difference in another person's life. That's what MPO is in the business to do - bringing hope and a better quality of life to others. We have all had times in our lives that someone has been there to help us. I am glad we were given the opportunity to pay it forward."

Otto Bock 3R92 Knee Offers Improved Braking System



Improved functionality in knee joints for low- and moderate-activity above-knee amputees can be found in the Otto Bock 3R92.

The 3R92 is equipped with a load-

dependent braking mechanism that offers the above-knee amputee increased security. At heel contact, the brake is activated and stabilizes the prosthesis throughout the entire loading response phase of stance.

The 3R92 offers an improvement over conventional friction-brake knee joints, which must be unweighted for release. But the 3R92 releases during forefoot loading, so that the user can easily initiate swing-phase without having to hip-hike, delivering a more correct gait.

"Its unlocking action when the patient loads the toe is a feature that is new to this type of knee joint," said Richard Brunner, CP. "It provides a smoother gait and patients have found its lighter weight (1.6 lbs.) also helps them ambulate better."

Swing phase is controlled by a dual chamber pneumatic cylinder and is ideal for patients who can vary their cadence. The result is smooth, secure walking that saves energy for the user, while also offering a more natural gait

The 3R92 can accommodate above-knee patients up to 275 pounds.

As with all prosthetic components, what works for one patient may not be appropriate for another. Every amputee has a different residual limb and will use their prosthesis in different ways. As with any upper or lower prosthesis, the practitioners at Muilenburg evaluate each person's individual situation to select the most beneficial device for them.

For more information about the Otto Bock 3R92 knee, contact your MPO practitioner at (713) 524-3949.

Fred Winter Lives Life to the Fullest ... and He Encourages Others to Do the Same

At 89 years young, Fred Winter doesn't just talk the talk, he walks the walk.

Put another way, Fred backs up his words with action. Such as when he recently took his first parachute jump, whose sole purpose was to send a message that "just because you're an amputee, it doesn't mean you can't do things."

Fred chose skydiving as the most dramatic way to illustrate that. "I swim three days a week and play golf. Those things are fine but they don't get attention. I wanted to get the word out, so I chose to skydive."

He hopes his jump offers some inspiration to the wounded military returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and for those who are losing limbs due to complications from diabetes.

"I want them to know that life goes on after amputation," Fred said.

Fred became an amputee in 1983 when a hunting partner's gun accidentally went off and shattered his ankle.

"I went through four campaigns and never got a scratch," he said, referring to his service in the South Pacific during World War II as an Army Air Corps Sergeant. "Then, while on my own property hunting quail, I got my foot blown off. I still hunt, but not quite as much as I used to," he said.

Fred is a patient of Muilenburg

practitioner Earl Fogler, CP.

"Fred is truly a great patient," Earl emphasizes. "He is so active and always willing to work hard; he is always very pleasant."

Fred wears an ALPHA® Cushion Liner with a Dermo suspension sleeve and the Flex-Foot® Axia™ from Ossur.

"The Axia is a fantastic prosthetic foot designed for the active walker of any age," said Richard D. Brunner, CP, LP. "Furthermore, it gives return energy and multi-axial ankle control in a compact lightweight design. I have yet to see any patient not enjoy and gain stride in their gait when wearing a prosthetic foot of this caliber."

Fred recalled being in the plane at 14,000 feet just prior to his jump. "I wondered, what am I doing," he said.

That was just a fleeting thought, and then Fred, who was strapped to instructor Robert "Hoop" Williams in the tandem jump, yelled the traditional "Geronimo" as the pair exited the plane.

"We fell about 9,000 feet at 120 miles per hour before I pulled the cord," he said.

Although he described the descent as peaceful, Fred said he "couldn't help but think of the paratroopers in combat who are floating targets.

"People ask me if I would do it again...No, it would be stupid to do it again," he said matter-of-factly.

"I'm not skydiving for the thrill of jumping out



of an airplane. I'm doing it for a purpose. I have felt for some time that just because you lose a leg, the world doesn't come to an end," he said.

Fred's wife of 51 years, Lila, waited on the ground for Fred to return from his jump.

"My husband is truly an inspiration to many people, and we feel that many more will find hope from hearing his story," she said.

Fred and Lila have three children, six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

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MPO Introduces Updated Web Site, New Corporate Brochure

If you have been to our Web site recently, www.muilenburgpando.com, you may have noticed that we have a fresh new look that is brighter, more informative, and easier to navigate.

Our Web site provides information about our certified staff, patient services and the newest technology we are using to further our patients' rehabilitation goals. We invite you to browse our

site and read our patient success stories and our current and archived newsletters. We've also added links to orthotic and prosthetic professional organizations and to resources that offer information and programs for the disabled.

Our contact information is provided, and we welcome your questions and comments.

We also have a new eight-page corporate brochure now available, which provides information about our practice, areas of focus, and vision for our patients.

This is in addition to our updated Skin Care Guide for Amputees and Care Guide for Upper Extremity Amputees.

If you would like to receive these printed materials from Muilenburg, contact us at (713) 524-3949.

